

## Pt 4 Why We Are Baptist, Our Forefathers

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney 09-19-2018

We continue this week with Part 4 of Why We Are Baptist. Last week we looked at the 8-Baptist Distinctives as listed in the acrostic that spells out the word BAPTISTS, and we said those were:

- 1) **B**iblical Authority
- 2) **A**utonomy of the local Church
- 3) **P**riesthood of the Believer
- 4) **T**wo Ordinances – Baptism and Lord’s Supper
- 5) **I**ndividual Soul Liberty
- 6) **S**aved and Baptized Church Membership
- 7) **T**wo Officers – Pastor and Deacons
- 8) **S**eparation of Church and State, Personal, and Ecclesiastical

Tonight, Lord willing, we will be looking at some of the men who were instrumental in pioneering what we now refer to as the Baptist faith. But first, I want us to read from the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus was instructing his disciples concerning their faith and sharing their faith in this world and how they should expect

persecution: †**Matthew 10:16-25**

16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

17 But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;

18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.

20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against *their* parents, and cause them to be put to death.

22 And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.

24 The disciple is not above *his* master, nor the servant above his lord.

25 It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more *shall they call* them of his household?

As we trace our Baptist faith back to Jesus and his disciples, we immediately see that the words we just read from our founder, the Lord Jesus Christ, most certainly have come true. We know that this persecution that he talked about began in his day with his crucifixion on a Roman cross.

Persecution continued with the disciples and followers of Christ as we read about the martyrdom of Stephen, and James and history tells us of the martyrdom of all the disciples except the Apostle John who they say was boiled in oil but survived.

We see this persecution coming from many different sources:

- The unbelieving Jews.
- The Roman Empire.
- The Catholic Church (which is part of the Roman Empire).
- Many of the Protestant denominations that sprang out of the reformation such as:
  - The Church of England which were Anglicans
  - The Lutherans
  - The Presbyterians

You must keep in mind that these denominations that sprang out of the Reformation were all Catholic to start with. Their leaders were men such as; Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, and Huldrych Zwingli, and they were all Roman Catholic and had practiced Catholicism their entire life. But when they began to try and reform the Roman Catholic Church, and it didn't work, it resulted in the Protest which brought about the Protestant Movement which was essentially just a bunch of Roman Catholics protesting against the Catholic Church.

These once Roman Catholics, continued with much of the same tradition and hierarchy as the Roman Catholic Church, only they did not follow the Pope and they put into place the reforms that they wanted the Catholic Church to make. But, they still practiced many of the same things such as: infant baptism and other dogma that was invented by the Roman Catholics.

Therefore, anyone who was a true practicing Baptist that refused to follow the doctrine of infant baptism or other man-made inventions, were persecuted all through the centuries by the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant denominations.

These that were persecuted, although not always named “**Baptist**,” were known by other names such as Dr. Carroll has outlined in his Trail of Blood chart:

- Christians
- Montanists
- Donatists
- Paulicians
- Waldenses
- Baptists
- And many others that faithfully practiced the Baptist faith.

Of course, all of these were considered, **AnaBaptists** – or **Re-Baptizers** because they only baptized those that had received Christ as their Savior and made a confession of faith in Jesus. Most of those had been baptized as babies by the Catholic Church, therefore, they were accused of Re-Baptizing them, when it wasn't really Re-Baptizing, it was baptizing them in believers' baptism.

Let's also not forget why infant baptism was started. We haven't talked about that a whole lot but let's make sure we know that infant baptism (also known as PedoBaptism) is not found anywhere in the Bible. In fact, you don't find the practice of infant baptism for the first 300 years of the Church. There is some historical evidence that some groups of people did practice infant baptism as early as AD 220, however, this was not the doctrine of any church.

Infant Baptism was an invention of the Roman Catholic Church. It really began in AD 313 when Constantine lifted the ban on Christianity and began transforming Rome into a Christian society. It was at this point that a hierarchy was established consisting of the Roman Empire and the Church, with the Emperor Constantine setting himself up at the top of the pyramid as supreme ruler. This is what eventually turned into **The Roman Catholic Church**.

Along with this new hierarchy, new doctrine was established such as the false teaching of **Baptismal Regeneration** – which is the belief that being baptized **literally** washes your sins away and is necessary for salvation. This is the reason the Catholic Church also calls Baptism a sacrament and not an ordinance as we do.

So, with this very weak and unbiblical view of baptism, they decided, “**well, if baptism washes sins away then let’s start baptizing all babies and wash away the original sin.**” This is normally done when they are 8-days old because they believe this to be the replacement for Jewish circumcision (which we will discuss in a few minutes). Thus, with baptismal regeneration, they began baptizing infants.

I want to pause here for a moment and say this: Despite history telling us that Constantine was the “**first Christian Emperor**,” because he claimed to have received a vision in which he saw a fiery cross in the sky with the inscription: “**By this symbol you will conquer.**” There is no evidence that Constantine truly ever was a Christian. It wasn’t until on his deathbed that he asked to be baptized, believing that the water somehow would wash his sins away. There is no evidence anywhere that he actually believed in Jesus for salvation.

Then about 100 years later in **AD 416**, the Roman Catholic Church, which was now essentially the government in Rome, with **St. Augustine** being the Bishop, infant baptism was made **compulsory by Roman Law**. If you did not have your baby baptized you were breaking the law and could be fined or arrested. Also, anyone caught re-baptizing anyone and the person getting “re-baptized,” were sentenced to death, and MILLIONS were put to death because they would not adhere to the false doctrine of infant baptism and baptismal regeneration.

If you want to know exactly why adhering to Biblical doctrine is so important, all you need to look at is this heresy committed by the Roman Catholic Church of infant baptism. They even take passages of Scripture from the Bible and twist them around to claim that is where they get that garbage from. I want to read you what is currently on **the official Catholic.com website**.

*“Since the New Testament era, the Catholic Church has always understood baptism differently, teaching that it is a sacrament which accomplishes several things, the first of which is the remission of sin, both original sin and actual sin—only original sin in the case of infants and young children, since they are incapable of actual sin; and both original and actual sin in the case of older persons.”*

*“Furthermore, Paul notes that baptism has replaced circumcision (Col. 2:11–12). In that passage, he refers to baptism as “the circumcision of Christ” and “the circumcision made without hands.” Of course, usually only infants were circumcised under the Old Law; circumcision of adults was rare, since there were few converts to Judaism. If Paul meant to exclude infants, he would not have chosen circumcision as a parallel for baptism.”<sup>‡</sup>*

And they go on and on pulling Scripture out that has nothing to do with infant baptism and try to force it to fit. But the claim that Paul is indicating infant Baptism and that Baptism replaced circumcision, is completely ludicrous. Listen to what the Scriptures say, and I’m going to read it in its full context and not grab two verses out like the Catholics: **Colossians 2:6-15**

6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:  
7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.  
8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.  
9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.  
10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:  
11 **In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:**  
12 **Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.**  
13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;  
14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;  
15 *And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*

Now, where exactly is Paul stating that infants are to be baptized??? NO WHERE. Where exactly did Paul say that Circumcision was replaced by Baptism? NO WHERE. Paul says: **11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:** Paul plainly is stating the fact that fleshly circumcision which is performed by man’s hands, is no longer valid, it was under the Old Covenant, but now because of the sacrifice of Jesus we are under a New Covenant and fleshly circumcision is no longer required because we are fully circumcised without hands, through Christ Jesus. Circumcision means “separated.” We are separated unto Christ when we receive Him as our Savior. (see **Romans 2:25-29**)

Then Paul mentions the Believer’s Baptism which ALWAYS follows salvation: **12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.**

This should give us a wakeup call to just how important sound doctrine is. The heresy of infant baptism has caused the deaths of millions of Baptists over the years. It is estimated that over 50 million people were put to death because they did not believe in infant baptism and baptismal regeneration.

So, we, as Baptist, need to be very careful that we do not allow ourselves to slip off into some type of Romanish ritual or habit and allow it to turn into Church doctrine. (Can I say it again, Black suit, white shirt, red tie...) It is very easy to allow man-made traditions and preferences to become more important than doctrinal theology and Scriptural practices.

Okay, so now that we covered a lot of our past and the persecution that Baptists have faced over the years I want to look at some of the people that were instrumental in the Baptist faith movement throughout history.

When studying about Baptist history you will hear several names thrown around, such as **Smyth, Helwys, Zwingli, Grebel, Mantz, Blaurock, and Hubmeyer**. Due to time limitations, I want to just discuss only one of them tonight, John Smyth.

If you were to go to Google and type in “**Baptist Founder**” you will immediately be presented with the name “**John Smyth**” as the founder of the Baptists. This, of course, is not correct. While John Smyth may have helped establish the first **General Baptist Church** over in Amsterdam in the early 1600’s, that certainly was NOT the beginning of Baptists.

Being Baptist is more of a doctrine, theology, and practice than it is a denominational name. We, of course, believe in the perpetuity of the church, that you can trace our doctrine and theology of faith and practice directly back to Jesus and his disciples, and just as outlined in Dr. Carroll’s book, there is **an unbroken chain of succession**, or as he calls it a “**trail of blood**,” that we can trace our Baptist history back through.

**John Smyth** – was an Anglican Pastor out of the Church of England. He disagreed with many of the practices of the Anglicans, including infant baptism. He renounced the Anglican Church and separated from it.

He became a pastor in another religious group called “**Brownists**,” named after a man named **Robert Browne**, who had **separated from the Church of England**. The **Pilgrims on the Mayflower**, although they are usually referred to as **Puritans**, were actually **Brownists**. They held Puritan Calvinistic beliefs.

Of course, Smyth along with his followers, were branded as heretics and forced to flee in exile from England by King James I.

Smyth and his followers fled to Amsterdam where there was more tolerance for different religious practices. There were many Ana-Baptist there, and a large group of them were Mennonites. Eventually Smyth had a falling out with the Brownists over infant baptism and was excommunicated from them. He along with those that followed him then formed their own religious group that believed only in baptizing of those that had repented and placed their faith in Christ for salvation – thus they were known as **Baptists**.

Smyth is known for baptizing himself and the members of his church. This group of people became what is referred to as the first **General Baptist Church of Amsterdam**. This was somewhere around **1606 or 1607**.

We don’t have time to go into it tonight but one man that John Smyth had great influence upon was a man named **Thomas Helwys**, who would eventually take over as pastor after Smyth died and then shortly after, in 1611, would go back to England with 12 of the members and begin the first **General Baptist Church in England**.

Speaking of the the term “**General Baptist**”: there were two different sets of Baptists at that time: General Baptist, and Particular Baptist.

**General Baptist** – believe in general-atonement, meaning Who-So-Ever will can be saved, and they held to the teaching of **James Arminius** which is called the *doctrine of Arminianism*.

**Particular Baptist** – believe in particular-atonement, meaning only the elect can be

saved. They held with the teachings of **John Calvin** and the *doctrine of Calvinism*. Next week, Lord willing, we will look at some more Baptist Forefathers and the history of Baptists in the United States.

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† All Scripture from Authorized King James Bible

‡ <https://www.catholic.com/tract/infant-baptism> retrieved on 9/18/2018.